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ON VERGIL *ECLOGUE* iv. 60-63

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Every student of Vergil knows that the text and the interpretation of lines 60-63 of the *Fourth Eclogue* constitute one of the perennially fascinating problems connected with this enigmatic poem. Is the *risus* of line 60 the child's smile at the mother or the mother's smile at the child? When a male infant is born to be the darling of the gods, is his great destiny presaged by his smile at his parents or by his parents' smile at him? It is the irony of fate that these four charming and tender verses, the meaning of which hinges on a question of "innocent merriment," should have proved to be a business so serious, should have evoked a volume of anything but lightsome discussion. However, the elusive shades of the poet's language, baffling to any unanimity of opinion, and the incidents of textual tradition have so ordered. Through generations of criticism, this *risus* has been, in respect to inscrutability, a kind of philological counterpart to the smile of Mona Lisa.

Even the war was powerless to interrupt the almost cosmic regularity with which this controversy seems predestined to assert and to reassert itself. Various scholars have, from year to year, returned to the old issue.¹ There is, consequently, no lack of

¹ Notes and articles dealing primarily with the problem are: Phillimore, *CR*, XXX (1916), 149; *CR*, XXXI (1917), 23; H. W. Green, *CR*, XXX (1916), 191; A. E. Codd, *CR*, XXXI (1917), 22; P. Rasi, *Riv. di filol.*, XLV, 2 (1917), 190-96; Birt, *BPhW*, XXXVIII (1918), 186 f.; Kurfess, *ibid.*, 760; Warde Fowler, *CR*, XXXIII (1919), 67. Passing allusion to the crux is made by J. Geffcken, "Die Hirten auf dem Felde," *Herm.*, XLIX (1914), 339.

recent and imposing precedent for yielding to the lure which this crux seems chronically to exert, although the assumption that it is possible to add, at this late day, anything significant to the discussion, necessitates, if only for the sake of modesty, a word of explanation. The immediate impetus to publish some jottings that have long been accumulating among my notes has been furnished by the fact that Phillimore and Birt have lately championed what has been with me an inveterate preference for *qui non risere parentes*, the corrected text of Quintilian ix. 3. 8,¹ over *cui non risere parentes* of the manuscripts of Vergil, the reading also of Servius. Concerning the criticism that has been centered on the *Eclogue* as a whole, Salomon Reinach has written felicitously: "L'histoire d'un problème littéraire posé depuis bientôt vingt siècles est un chapitre singulièrement instructif de celle des idées."² It is also possible to indulge in a generalization concerning much of the work that has been expended on the famous epilogue of the poem. The last four lines, because of the nature of their content, offer several points of attack to which those who interest themselves in trying to unriddle the poet's meaning will tend to direct their efforts according to their individual penchants and scopes of scholarly interests. So we can discern, registered in the various attempts at explanation, the faith of the several interpreters—*chacun à son goût*—that mythology, religion, folk-lore, Latinity, physiological law, or *Buchwesen* offers the key to the mystery. The reader of this article will soon see that my own pet ideas on this passage are concerned largely with the folk-lore which I find reflected in it. The notion that Vergil *garrit anilis ex re fabellas* is not new; nevertheless, there is a line of reasoning which has been quite neglected in this connection. Furthermore, though a meticulous evaluation, in the canonical style of the *Jahresbericht*, of the criticism that has been expended on this passage is not the prime object of this paper, I shall beg leave to comment, by way of preliminary and even at the risk of assuming at times the rôle of Browning's

Critic and whippersnapper, in a rage
To set things right,

on some of the oversights of my predecessors.

¹ See Politian, *Miscell. cent.*, c. 89.

² *Cultes, mythes et religions* (2d ed.; Paris, 1908), II, 66, reprinted from *Revue de l'histoire de religions*, XLII (1900), 365–83.

The strength of Birt's defense of the reading *qui non risere parentes*, adherents to which have been in a decided minority among editors and critics,¹ lies in its objectivity. To what extent his reasoning is based upon the tangibilities of orthographical and linguistic usage will appear from a brief résumé of his main arguments: (1) the frequency with which in the third century A.D., the period when the text of Vergil was transferred from papyrus roll to parchment codex, *qui* as a dative form usurped the place of *cui*; (2) instances in *le vrai latin*, and Greek as well, of such free concinnity as must be assumed to exist, in case the *lectio difficilior* be adopted, between the plural *qui* and the singular *hunc*; (3) the currency, in the Latin of everyday life, of *ridere* with the connotation of the laugh of good-natured and tolerant amusement. Birt's arguments go far to stifle whatever misgivings on the score of palaeography and Latinity partisans of the text of lines 62-63, as it is indicated by Quintilian, might entertain. Kurfess, *BPhW*, XXXVIII (1918), 760-61, is apparently ready to be converted to Birt's view. Birt's chief contributions have to do with points (1) and (2) enumerated above. His instances of *ridere* with the accusative where sympathetic and responsive merriment, not mockery or derision, is expressed, are mostly the conventional examples that have passed into exegetical heritage. His list could have been extended had the exigencies of the times allowed him to consult Phillimore's earlier articles in *CR*, XXX (1916), 149 f., and XXXI (1917), 23. However, for the reading *qui non risere* it is sheer gain that the two scholars should have arrived independently at an identical conclusion touching the idiomatic possibilities of *ridere* followed by the accusative.

We shall see that Birt had one or two additions to make to the parallels to this passage forthcoming from folk belief. Of these

¹ As to this reading, approved by Scaliger, the estimate of Cartault, *Étude sur les Buc. de Virg.*, p. 247, n. 1, "est inadmissible," represents the consensus of critical opinion. In recent years the nominative *qui* has gained slowly in popularity, but most of the partisans of this variant tend to insist on *parenti*, e.g. Benoist, Cartault, Crusius, *RhM*, LI (1896), 551, Hirtzel, Havet, *Manuel de critique verbale* (Paris, 1911), § 76, p. 13, Plessis, *Les Bucoliques* (Paris, 1913); Postgate, *CR*, XVI (1902), 36, proposed to join with *parenti* additional emendation of ll. 62-63. Seaton's defense of *qui* . . . *parenti*, *CR*, VII (1893), 199, is accorded special mention on page 212. *Qui* . . . *parentes* is favored by Fowler, *Virgil's Messianic Eclogue*, pp. 71 f., Lejay, *Rev. de philol.*, XXXVI (1912), 6, Phillimore, and Birt, *op. cit.*

more hereafter. His point of departure is the oft-mentioned excursus of Crusius "Zur vierten Ekloge," *RhM*, LI (1896), 551. For some reason this paper has been vouchsafed the standing of the classic exposition of the merits of *qui non risere* for this generation. Thus, this scholar is the only champion of the reading prior to himself that Birt mentions by name, although we are told, and truly, that Crusius succeeded in promoting rather than in proving his interpretation of the passage. Similarly, in the Oxford text edition, Hirtzel motivates his adoption of the reading *qui non risere parenti* by the note "commendat O. Crusius." As a matter of strict justice Crusius' article hardly deserves this splendid isolation as the first-line defense. Some years before it was published, R. C. Seaton in *CR*, VII (1893), 199, had made a well-reasoned plea for *qui . . . parenti*. The one essential point in which Crusius was not anticipated by the British scholar is the way in which are utilized the statements of the Elder Pliny, *H.N.* vii. praef. and 16, in which is denied the possibility of even a "colicky" smile on the part of an infant before the fortieth day,¹ and the precocious laugh of the infant Zoroaster is chronicled. In the exegesis of these concluding lines of the *Eclogue* some play had been made with Pliny's homely wisdom long before Crusius cited it. There are echoes of it in the commentary of Philargyrius on the *Eclogue*, line 60, although the scholiast does not mention his source. Voss, whose attention few essentials to the interpretation of the *Eclogues* escaped, also cites it (see 2d ed., Altona, 1830, I, 172). It fell likewise within the ken of the English schoolmaster, B. H. Malkin, to latter-day fame unknown. Let the reader whose rigid devotion to the philological "science" as at present formulated does not exclude appreciation of the mellow antiquarianism of the old-time learning, turn to Malkin's "disquisition" on the concluding lines of the *Eclogue* in the book entitled *Classical Disquisitions and Curiosities* (London, 1825, pp. 397 f.). Sonntag in *Vergil als bucolischer Dichter* (Leipzig, 1891, p. 83, n. 3) also takes cognizance of Pliny's information. Modern editors of

¹ First reported by Aristotle, *Hist. anim.* viii. 10. 587b. 6 and *De anim. gen.* v. 1. 779a. 11, as a fact of infant psychology, and transmitted, through Varro, to Pliny and others: see Marx, *Neue Jahrb.*, I (1898), 127; Geffcken, *op. cit.*, p. 339, n.; Mayhoff, *Nat. Hist.*, 2 ed., p. 2.

the *Eclogues* have not been given to citing Pliny's words as pertinent; none the less is it evident that their applicability to the context in the *Eclogue* had become a part of the *ager publicus* of Vergilian exegesis long before Crusius' time. He was not the pioneer in establishing the contact, although he has received the credit for so being.

The difference between Crusius and his predecessors lies in this detail: They quoted Pliny as proof that Vergil could not have intended so far to transgress the laws governing the "expression of the emotions in man and animals" as to represent a new-born babe as smiling at its parents. Crusius, on the contrary, resorted to the legend concerning Zoroaster in order to establish the contention that Vergil was portraying the supernormal capabilities of a wonder-child, and that the passage in the *Eclogue* must be read and understood accordingly. This is the specific contribution made by Crusius, which, tested by the equities of scholarship, stamps his defense of Quintilian's *testimonium*, emended to *qui non risere parenti*, as a slight step beyond Seaton. The latter scholar, however, was as ready as Crusius to pass beyond the world of prose and plain facts in order to elucidate the poet's intention. For, in answer to Sonntag's assertion, based on Pliny, that the ordinary human infant does not smile before the fortieth day, Seaton wrote: "Whatever the literal fact may be, if Vergil chooses to make an infant smile or recognize on the day of his birth, he is surely within his rights as a poet."

These words have been written with no thought of instituting an invidious comparison. But, in a field so vast as that of Vergilian exegesis, it is a matter of prime importance for the progress of criticism that each successive contributor take pains to assure himself and his readers that he is making an essential advance over his predecessors. Otherwise, movement is not forward, but in circle. Thus the suggestion, elaborated by Birt in the conclusion of his article, that the poet assumed the rôle of nurse in writing the last lines of the *Eclogue*, hence that it is "Ammenlatein" that we hear, is an old story. Seventeen years ago this view was clearly enunciated by W. Warde Fowler in his well-known essay entitled "The Child of the Poem," printed first in *Harvard Studies*, XIV

(1903), 26 f., and afterward included in the little volume, *Virgil's Messianic Eclogue* (London, 1907). The credit for this idea belongs, as Fowler properly acknowledges, to the paper of Seaton. Says Professor Fowler: "The *vates* turns to the new-born infant, and, dropping the character of prophet, speaks to it in the *language and in the tender tones of an Italian nurse*."¹ Rediscovery of the ideas of previous commentators is an event likely to fall to the lot of any student of Vergil. In such a case confession is good for the soul and profit to the reader, as Professor Fowler realized when he found that his explanation of line 63, to quote his words, is "practically the one" proposed by Scaliger. Those who are familiar with Fowler's essay will recall that he went to Roman religion for the interpretation of the last line in the *Eclogue*, and identified *deus* and *dea* respectively with the male genius or Hercules, and the female genius or Juno, the *di coniugales* who were concerned in the birth of every child. "The child that will not smile on his mother," explains Professor Fowler, "is not worthy of notice from the deities who preside over his parents' union." As the basis for this conclusion a note in the *Servius* of Daniel was utilized: *proinde nobilibus pueris editis in atrio domus Iunoni lectus, Herculi mensa ponebatur*. The pertinency of this comment as an index to the meaning of the cryptic line Professor Fowler regarded at first as his own discovery, only to find out that, in most essentials, he had been anticipated by Scaliger.

I hope it will not seem a superfluous breach of amenity to point out that Professor Fowler's² estimate of the significance of Scaliger's contribution to our topic is decidedly in need of modification. Leyden's great philologist, in a note to Catullus lxi. 212 (Ellis), 219 (Friedrich), *dulce rideat ad patrem*, contained in his edition of Catullus, Tibullus, Propertius, published in 1577, reprinted in 1600 and thereafter, declared for the reading *qui non risere parentes* in the *Eclogue*, and, apropos of the last line, observed:

Nascentibus putabant adesse, mari Genium, qui est deus mensae, feminae Iunonem, quae est dea cubilis. Qui, inquit, non risere ad parentes, nec Genius illum accipit mensa, nec dea hanc cubili.

¹ The italics are mine; see pp. 69 and 70 of Fowler's essay.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 77.

Professor Fowler, in a laudable desire to render unto Scaliger that which was Scaliger's, bestows upon him praise for originality beyond his deserts in the treatment of the line of the *Eclogue*. Scaliger was not, as Professor Fowler assumes, the first to dismiss the Servian explanation, derived from the myth of Juno's displeasure at the unlovely appearance of the young Vulcan, and to adopt a ritualistic interpretation in lieu of the mythological. The *Liber miscellaneorum* of Angelo Politian, published in 1489 and hence antedating Scaliger's *Castigationes in Catullum* by nearly ninety years, gives utterance to a scornful rejection of the comment of Servius. Indeed, Politian accuses Servius of having, with malice aforethought, warped the mythological data to make them suit his purpose. How justly Politian deserves the compliments paid to Scaliger by Professor Fowler, the following extract from the *Miscellanea*¹ will most clearly demonstrate:

Nec Genius nec Iuno vitalibus auris dignum putavere hunc ex illis qui non risere. . . . Credebatur enim habere quisque suum deum suamque deam, hoc est, suum Genium suamque Iunonem vitae praesides. Hos igitur indicavit Maro katexochen. Mensa enim Genio convenit: ut "Funde merum genio," Iunoni lectus.

The hint for this interpretation Politian derived from the comment of Philargyrius on *Eclogue* iv. 63. This note is practically identical with the comment in the *Servius Auctus* which was cited above.

Professor Fowler believes that Scaliger regarded the genius merely as a *numen mensae*. I am not so sure that this is a correct assumption. It is possible that the brevity of Scaliger's Latin disguised his knowledge. He was undoubtedly acquainted with Politian's discussion, and the latter, while, as La Rue remarks in his note on the lines of the *Eclogue*, he went astray in assigning both a genius and a Juno to every human being without reference to the sex distinction, had at least a clear conception of the two divinities in their capacities as male and female guardian *numina* of mortal life. This is indicated not only by the extract from the *Miscellanea* quoted above, but by the citation of apposite passages with which the chapter concludes. Perhaps Scaliger's *deus mensae* conceals what Politian's *mensa* . . . *convenit*, etc., expresses more lucidly,

¹ C. 89.

viz., that *mensa* concords as a symbol with the genius, the couch with the Juno. Politian, I may add, also broke a lance for the nominative *qui*. But in respect to his proposal to take *parentes* as a vocative, he suffers in comparison with Scaliger.

From this, I trust not wholly futile, excursus on some of the points that have emerged from the history of the scholarship elicited by our problem, I turn again to the view of Crusius that, in the last four verses of the *Eclogue*, Vergil intended to make the new-born regenerator of the age behave as no ordinary infant could, and thus to raise him at once into the sphere of the miraculous. The precocious smile is thus to be regarded as a type of the prodigies which popular belief in all ages and in all lands attached to the birth of children destined to a great future.¹ With the exception of the context from Pliny, the analogies which Crusius cited are taken from modern superstition and folk-lore. Nevertheless, there are forthcoming from ancient literature various more or less apposite parallels which it has always been a source of wonder to me that Crusius did not take pains to search out. It would seem to be patent that his explanation, based as it is on a folk superstition, gains in cogency the more prevalent in ancient tale and legend the notion that wonderchildren laugh or smile at birth can be shown to be. For some years subsequent to my first acquaintance with Crusius' article I have made, as opportunity offered, some effort to collect data on this point. The most impressive array of parallels that has been published is to be found in R. C. Kukula's book, *Römische Säkularpoesie* (Leipzig and Berlin, 1911, pp. 63-66).² The author's erudition yielded most, though, as we shall see, not all, of the inevitable parallels, such as the Homeric *Hymn to Pan* 35, where the epithet ἡδύγελως is applied to the new-born god; Catullus lxi. 216 f., since Scaliger's time often quoted in this connection;

¹ For some specimens from the voluminous chronicles of such legends, see W. Crooke, "The Legends of Krishna," *Folk-lore*, XI (1900), 9 f.

² The merits of Kukula's theory that ll. 60-63 are to be transposed to a place succeeding l. 25 and that the poem is a genethliakon, constructed along orthodox rhetorical lines and glorifying the youthful Octavius, need not concern us here. This view has not gained acceptance; see Beltrami, *Riv. di filol.*, XL (1912), 303-13; Lejay, *Rev. de philol.*, XXXVI (1912), 26 f.; Rasi, "Bibl. Virg.," *Atti e Mem. d. r. Accad. di Mantova*, V (1912), 161; Prickard, *CR*, XXVI (1912), 226 f.

Theocritus xxiv. 31, cited at least as early as Voss (see I, 172), and referring to the nursling Herakles as αἰὲν ἄδακρυς. I have implied above that these analogies are not equal in point of applicability if they are scrutinized by a severe critic. Thus it might plausibly be urged that the epithet ἡδύγελως is naturally pertinent to the description of an infant god destined to figure as a kind of tricky sprite and *farceur* in many a legend from his birth on. The *vagitus*, a conventional feature in the legends of the birth of Zeus,¹ could be cited as proof positive that myth-mongers might sacrifice the miraculous for the realistic in portraying the birth of a god. Catullus' picture of *Torquatus parvulus, porrigens teneras manus*, would surely indicate that the poet had in mind a child some weeks² or even some months old, unless we are to suppose that, consciously or unconsciously, physiological facts were neglected for the sake of an appealing touch. The child Herakles, "who never cried under the nurse's care," is more to the point; Kukula indeed saw in the characterization of Herakliskos the actual model which Vergil followed in making the child of the *Eclogue* greet his mother with a smile of recognition in line 60, which, by the way, is as far as Kukula believes the allusion to a smile on the part of the child extends. In his interpretation of lines 62-63 he follows the time-honored reading *cui non risere parentes*.

There are some additions to be made to the parallels cited by Kukula. The new-born Dionysus was also represented by the poets and mythographers as greeting the world with a smile. The accidents of literary survival have decreed that instances are to be found in the later poetic tradition only, which, nevertheless, we know was a replica of the treatment of the legend of Dionysus by the older poets. Hence there is no reason to suppose that the motive of the smile was merely an invention of such writers as

¹ See, e.g., Callimachus *Elis Δία* 54; Lucretius ii. 634; Ovid *Fasti* iv. 207; Hyginus *Fab.* 139; Statius *Theb.* iv. 786; Servius on *Aen.* iii. 104; etc.

² Lejay also points out the obvious fact that "Catulle ne parle pas de la naissance de l'enfant"; *Rev. de philol.*, XXXVI (1912), 8-9. As to Lejay's mathematical interpretation of *decem . . . menses* (l. 61) and his consequent theory that the smile of the babe was thought of as occurring forty days after birth, and not partaking of the miraculous, I shall merely remark that the conclusions of this paper would show that, whatever Vergil's own conception may have been, the critics of the first century A.D. attached the value of a prodigy to the smile.

Dionysius Periegetes and Nonnus. As early as Hesiod's *Theogony* the geniality naturally attached to such a divine personality as that of Bacchus found expression in the epithet *πολυγυθής*; *Theog.* 941.

In Dionysius Periegetes we read how the infant Bacchus dons the fawnskin and the ivy wreath, and brandishes the thyrsus,

μειδιών, καὶ πολλὸν ἐπ' ἀνδράσιν ὄλβον ἔχενεν [949].

Compare the free rendition of this passage in Avienus *Descriptio Orbis* 1117-31, especially 1117-19:

Vera fides, illic femoris sub imagine partus
Disrupisse Iovem penetralia; proderet ortus
Ut sacer aetheria fulgentem fronte Lyaeum,

and 1130-31:

Attollit thyrsos, et blandi luminis igne
Os hilarat, totaque celer diffunditur aethra.

Nonnus *Dionys.* ix. 25-26 is just as explicit:

καὶ μιν ἀχυτλώτοιο διαίττοντα λοχείης
πήχει κούρον ἄδακρυν ἐκούφισε σύγγονος Ἑρμῆς.

Cf. also ix. 35-36:

καὶ πόλον ἐσκοπίαζεν ἀήθεα, θαμβαλέος δὲ
πατρώην ἐγέλασεν ἱτὺν δεδοκημένος ἀστρων.

Elsewhere in Nonnus *ἀδάκρυτος* is a conventional epithet of Dionysus, e.g. xi. 208; xii. 138; xxx. 110. In the description of the birth of Bacchus given by Philostratus, *Eikones* i. 14, a similar touch is found: ὁ δὲ Διόνυσος τῆς μὲν μητρὸς ἐκθρώσκει ῥαγείσης τὴν γαστέρα, τὸ δὲ πῦρ ἀχλυῶδες ἐργάζεται φαιδρὸς (φαιδρόν) αὐτὸς, οἷον ἀστήρ τις, ἀστράπτων. The celestial effulgence of the babe implies a radiant countenance, whether we prefer *φαιδρόν* or *φαιδρὸς* of the manuscripts.¹

The propriety of utilizing these portrayals of the "shining morning face" of the infant Dionysus as suggestive of Vergil's intention in connection with his description of the demeanor of the child in the *Eclogue*, is comparatively immune from criticism akin to the possible objection mentioned above in the case of Pan. Bacchus, of

¹ I have not included with these references the pretty *genre* picture which Calpurnius (Nemesianus), *Ecl.* x, gives of the infant Bacchus under the tender ministrations of Silenus, esp. l. 29, *et vocat* (Silenus) *ad risum digito*, because nothing is said as to the age of the nursling.

course, belongs in the category of genial divinities, and, as poets have sung for all ages, is an *archegetes* in frolic and mirth. It needs no words to emphasize the absurdity of coupling the child of Vergil's poem, *incrementum Iovis*, and the god Pan either in respect to divine characteristics or the effect of their advent on the world. In this latter respect, however, there is a striking similitude between Dionysus and the child of the *Eclogue*. The points of contact between Vergil's description of the golden age renewed on earth at the coming of the *puer* and keeping pace with his increasing years, and the stories told about the spontaneous response from its bounty by which the nature of things manifests its felicity at the birth and the epiphanies of Bacchus, are so many and so real that certain critics have gone to the length of seeking in these resemblances the explanation of the identity of the child in the poem. Thus, forty years ago, Th. Plüss¹ followed this line of argument and arrived at the conclusion that the expected child was a son of Bacchus. More recently Salomon Reinach² advanced the view that Vergil was announcing the coming of a new Dionysus, the son of Jupiter. These theories have been relegated by the consensus of criticism to the limbo of unsuccessful attempts to solve the problem of the *Eclogue*. I do not purpose to resuscitate them; they are mentioned merely to show how potent are the analogies existing between Vergil's new paradise on earth and the details of the advent of Dionysus. Reinach has little to say concerning these likenesses. Plüss devotes the major portion of his article to presenting them, but mostly without references to their provenience. Other scholars who have discussed the *Eclogue* have made allusion in passing to those features of lines 18 f. that recall the poetic traditions clustering about the life-history of the young Dionysus.³ Hence we may dispense with repeating the data here. To admit the kinship between the setting in which Vergil stages his miraculous child and that in

¹ *Fleckeisens Jahrb.*, CXV (1877), 69 f.

² *Op. cit.*

³ Marx, *Neue Jahrb.*, I (1898), 114, notes that elements in the passage are reminiscent of the myths dealing with the births of gods; as parallels to *errantis hederas*, l. 19, and to the spontaneous bounty of the earth are quoted Euripides *Phoen.* 649 and the account of the birth of Dionysus in Dion. Peri. 935 f. See also Sudhaus, *RhM*, LVI (1901), 43 f.; Fowler, *op. cit.*, pp. 64 f. On other phenomena attendant on the epiphanies of Dionysus and reflected in Vergil, consult Usener, "Milch und Honig," *Kleine Schriften*, IV, 398 f., esp. 399.

which the god Dionysus appears, is not, of course, to admit that the child of the *Eclogue* is either Dionysus or a son of Dionysus. The point which I am urging is as follows: In respect to what their births and their visitations to earth mean for terrestrial felicity, and in respect to the fashion in which nature responds to their sojourns, Dionysus and the child of the *Eclogue* are closely bracketed. They belong to the same type of beneficent, superhuman personality at whose coming, to quote the words of the hymn, "Heaven and nature sing." For one of these good angels tradition, with an understandable deference to the proprieties of fable, decreed that a smiling countenance at birth was the meet concomitant.¹ We should not hesitate, therefore, to push the existing parallelism between the two a step farther, and to consider the poetic intention of Vergil in his portrayal of his wonderchild against this background. It seems strange that the peculiar applicability of this element in the legend of Dionysus should have escaped Kukula's notice.

Another apt parallel which I have treasured because neither Kukula nor any other writer had cited it until recently is Lucian, *Θεῶν Διάλ.* vii. 1: where Hephaestus says of the new-born Hermes: *έώρακας, ὦ Ἀπολλων, τὸ τῆς Μάϊας βρέφος τὸ ἄρτι τεχθέν; ὡς καλὸν τε ἔστι καὶ προσμειδιᾷ πᾶσι καὶ δηλοῖ ἤδη μέγα τι ἀγαθὸν ἀποβησόμενον.* Vain pride in exclusive possession, however, was dissipated by the perusal of Birt's article. This passage is one of the three that he cites to show that a smile is a traditional attribute of the new-born infant prodigy. The second is the context from Catullus, the relevancy of which I have, I believe, justly disparaged on a previous page. The third parallel is new, and is also from Lucian, viz., *Ἑναλ. Διάλ.* xii. 2, where the babe Perseus, afloat with Danaë, smiles undauntedly at the waves: *τὸ (βρέφος) δὲ ὑπ' ἀγνοίας τῶν κακῶν ὑπεμειδία πρὸς τὴν θάλατταν.* Perseus certainly belongs in the roster of wonderchildren. Here, to be sure, Lucian does not expressly, as he does in the case of Hermes, attach to the smile of the new-born babe any significance as a presage of

¹ The one exception that I have found is Oppian *Cyneg.* iv. 247-48 where the nurses of the infant Bacchus are represented as beating tympana and clashing cymbals to conceal the weeping of the child. This is a detail arbitrarily imported from the Zeus legend.

supermanhood. Nevertheless, if we contemplate the passage not in isolation, but in comparison with the other, in which Lucian treats the smile as an omen of the extraordinary potentiality of the infant Hermes, doubt is scarcely permissible that the author, when he wrote these words about Perseus, had in mind something more than the thought of painting, as a foil to the mother's terror and grief, the engaging artlessness of babyhood in the face of unrealized danger.

If, then, we call the roll of the divine or the semidivine personages in the legends of whose births what we might call the smile motive indisputably figures, to wit, Hercules, Hermes, Bacchus, Perseus, and Zoroaster; if we recall that according to Herodotus v. 92 it was a smile evoked *θείη ῥύχη* that saved the future tyrant Cypselus from the committee of ten detailed to murder him¹ and that Cyrus the Great¹ is said to have won the heart of the shepherd's wife in a similar way, *quem (Cyrum parvulum) ubi in manum mulier accepit, veluti ad notam adlusit, tantusque in illo vigor et dulcis quidam blandientis risus apparuit ut pastorem ultro rogaret uxor, et seq.*, Justinus i. 4. 12, we are brought to realize that we have to do with a *topos* that was widely disseminated in ancient folk-tale.² In the light of this fact, it is difficult not to believe that Vergil, adept as he was in lore and legend, intended to portray the deportment of the new hope of the world in conformity with one of the mythical conventions attached to descriptions of the birth of children of destiny. Any future editor of the *Eclogues* who fails to do justice to these data and their bearing on iv. 60-63 will leave a serious gap in his commentary. Reference to the child's smiling is imperatively called for somewhere in this passage. The few remaining critics who cling to the old view that *risu* in line 60 is to be understood of the mother's smile, and, at the same time, prefer the reading *cui non risere parentes* in line 62, shut their eyes to the probabilities.³

¹ Derived from Kukula.

² In *CR*, XXXIII (1919), 67, Professor Fowler quotes an informant to the effect that among the Russians the first smile and the first tear are eagerly awaited as harbingers of reason. Herein, of course, is no analogy to a precocious smile.

³ Among modern critics who maintain this view, now generally relinquished, are Beltrami, *Riv. di filol.*, XL (1912), 312, and Rasi, *Stud. ital. di filol. class.*, IX (1901), 291; *Atti d. Accad. di Mantova*, VIII, Part II (1915), 91 and notes; *Riv. di filol.*, XLV (1917), 190.

However, appreciation of the cogency of the evidence to be gleaned from folk-lore leaves one question still unanswered: Are the analogies furnished by legends dealing with the births of heroic children so appealing as necessarily to be applied to the last two lines, and thus be made to form an argument for the rejection of the traditional reading *cui non risere parentes*? At least it has been possible for exegetes to admit the force of the parallels as a decisive reason for taking *risu* in line 60 as the child's smile at the mother and, retaining the vulgate reading in lines 62-63, to seek for a corresponding explanation of what underlay the poet's words. This is the procedure adopted by Servius in his treatment of the passage. Among modern critics it is the line followed by Kukula. Neither Crusius nor Birt took cognizance of this possible circumscription of the validity of parallels; but it is plainly essential to reckon with such an objection.

We come to another step in our discussion. Strangely enough, the one passage in all ancient literature the claim of which to citation by any critic who seeks to solve the problem of the *Eclogue* by projecting upon it the evidence of folk belief is most urgent, has been all but completely overlooked. In the Suetonian *Life of Vergil* the infant Vergil himself is stated to have exhibited the tearless and serene countenance appropriate to the child born for great achievements. The passage reads (Brummer, ll. 12-14): *Ferunt infantem ut sit editus neque vagisse et adeo miti vultu fuisse ut haud dubiam spem prosperioris geniturae iam tum daret*. The failure of Crusius, Kukula, and Birt to utilize this passage is stern proof of how easy it is to be engrossed in the remote and to overlook the contiguous in philological research. I believe that I am correct in saying that Professor Fowler is the only one of those who have attacked the problem who has cited the context from the *Vita*. I discovered the reference in his essay in the course of an extended search to determine whether the point had been wholly neglected. Professor Fowler refers to it (p. 71, n. 2) in passing as a parallel and says that he has not seen it mentioned by previous investigators in this field.

A parallel it certainly is. Perhaps the only one comparable to it in respect to pertinency and to concreteness of testimony as to

the portent inhering in the smile of a new-born babe is Lucian *Θεῶν Διάλ.* quoted above. But in my eyes it is something far more significant than a parallel. Rightly appraised, it yields further evidence, corroborative of the corrected text of Quintilian and heartening to the partisans of his reading, that in the first century A.D. *qui non risere parentes* was the accepted version. The likelihood that this is what Vergil wrote is thus correspondingly enhanced. The passage in the *Life*, as I measure it, is not to be ranged with the other parallels and rated as another independent example of a feature of popular legend. There is a relation existing between the lines of the *Eclogue* and the words of the biographer, a relation definable as that of stem and offshoot. In other words, I hold that the *praesagium* of future greatness which was attached by the biographical tradition to the birth of Vergil was suggested originally and solely by the poet's "baby talk," with its wheedling warning of the inglorious consequences of the failure on the part of the *puer* to "make its calling and election" to greatness "sure" by conforming to the etiquette fixed by old wives' tales for such interesting occasions, as Dickens might say.

This theory, as will be recognized by those who have followed the recent movements in the criticism of ancient biographical composition in general, and of the Suetonian *Life* in particular, involves no novelty in method. How the ancient biographers of literary men worked, has become, thanks chiefly to Leo, an open book. Inferences based on the writings of their subjects, reconstruction of the intellectual life of men of letters, of their personalities, of the actual events of their careers in such a way as to motivate the content and spirit of their works, were devices constantly resorted to by the authors. Rationalistic study of the Suetonian *Life of Vergil* has demonstrated, in certain instances with certainty, in others with great plausibility, that exegesis and *αἰξήσις* of passages in the writings of the poet, especially in the *Eclogues* and the *Georgics* where his ego may be most readily postulated, lie at the root of dogmatic assertions. The most famous example is of course the treatment of the story of the eviction. To catalogue the other statements in the *Vita*, the genesis of which is susceptible of the same explanation, would involve a superfluous résumé of convictions

expressed by various scholars in the last twenty years. The claim of the present writer is that this criterion, the validity of which has become an article of faith, should be invoked in this additional case.

Hazardous though it may appear to endeavor to establish rhyme or reason among the workings of credulity and the imaginative, we may, I think, legitimately indulge in certain observations concerning the prodigies that were reputed to precede and accompany Vergil's nativity. Comparetti, *Virgil in the Middle Ages* (Eng. trans., p. 138),¹ rightly asserts that the inclusion of these tokens of future greatness is quite after the manner of Suetonius. Nettleship, *Ancient Lives of Vergil* (p. 9), and Koertge, "In Suetonii de viris illustribus libros inquisitionum capita tria" (*Diss. Philol. Halens.*, XIV [1901], 221), take the same attitude. There is no evidence making for the assumption that Donatus has applied an interpolating hand to this passage, hence we may dismiss that possibility from our calculations.

The first and the third of the portents, i.e., the mother's dream of the laurel tree and the miraculous growth of the poplar shoot, have an especial appositeness that easily accounts for their presence in the Vergilian legend. In the origin of each, aside from the standing of the tree in the paraphernalia of prodigies,² the etymological fancy, *Virgilius—virga*, was doubtless one efficient cause. Prenatal dreams by the mother of a child who is fated to play a great part, or sometimes by the father or some kinsman, are well-nigh prescribed by the amenities of legend. The dream of Vergil's mother is merely an obvious variant of a common type. It is almost unnecessary to recall the firebrand of Hecuba; Mandane's vine, which seemed to overrun all Asia, Herodotus i. 108 (cf. the similar motive in the dream of Astyages, i. 107); the dreams of Atia and Octavius, the parents of Augustus, Suetonius *Aug.* 94; Rhea Silvia's dream of the two palm trees, Ovid *Fasti* iii. 31.

. . . . ex illis altera maior erat
et gravibus ramis totum protexerat orbem.

¹ *Virgilio nel medio evo*, p. 183.

² Among many examples may be cited Suet. *Aug.* 94; *Vesp.* 5 (two); Livy xliii. 13. 5.

To the same class belong the dream of Clytaemnestra, Sophocles *Elec.* 417 f., in which she seems to behold, sprouting from the scepter of Agamemnon, a vigorous shoot "wherewith the whole land of Mycenae was overshadowed," and also Xerxes' dream of the olive branches that spread over the earth, Herodotus vii. 19, although in these two cases the portents foreshadow events other than the deeds of an unborn child. In the Suetonian *Life* the details of this canonical dream are merely altered to suit the career of one who is to be a great poet, not a conqueror or a potentate. It is self-evident that the laurel, the tree of Apollo and the Muses, with an assured position in the alphabet of omen and prophecy, should serve to symbolize the bard and the flowers of his poetry. The inventive faculty of the original mythographer, whoever he was, was as irrevocably committed to the choice of this tree as was Vergil to the choice of a grove of laurel for the Elysian habitat of his *pii vates* in *Aeneid* vi. 662.¹ As the preceding references show, the instantaneous or rapid growth to maturity to which the visioned laurel and the material poplar sapling are supposed to respond, is likewise a prescribed adjunct to such stories.

As a matter of fact, there are only two items in the story of the poplar shoot which can fairly arouse suspicion that the chronicler may have drawn somewhat too liberally on his imagination. The miraculous growth may well have been in the mind's eye; the statement *eodem loco*, necessitating as it does the assumption that the narrator felt that a nativity occurring in an ordinary environment was inappropriate for one of the world's great figures, may bear a romantic coloring. On the other hand, what would seem a *contretemps* to the sophisticated and the tender-minded, lies often in the course of nature for simpler ages and peoples. However this may be, the actual planting of the poplar belongs not to the Cockaigne of the imagination, but to the *terra firma* of authenticated folkway, viz., the superstition of the life-tree. The doctrine that a tree, planted at the birth of an infant, is a replica or symbol of the child's

¹ So the verities of romance demanded that Hesiod be fed on laurel from Helicon, a story later rationalized into a dream of the poet himself: ἐδῆλον δὲ τὸ δναρ πάντως ὡς πικρίας καὶ πόνων μετεσχηκῶς τῆς παιδείσεως ἀειθαλῇ γεννήσει ποιήματα; see Πρόκλου γένος Ἡσιόδου, Westermann, *Vit. script. Graec.*, pp. 45-46. Compare the allegorical value of *pomis et floribus* in the Suetonian *Life*.

life has been a tenet of popular belief in different ages and in many lands.¹ If the tree flourishes, the child will thrive, and vice versa. Mannhardt² long since pointed out the value of this passage in the *Life* of Vergil as an actual example of the usage, but this fact has not yet insinuated itself into the exegetical literature connected with Vergil. In the case of the third prodigy, therefore, we find that we are dealing with historicity which has been garnished only slightly with fiction by Suetonius or his informant. The elaborations are natural and explicable.

Returning to the prodigy which directly concerns us, we must acknowledge that here it was emphatically not true that the machine of imagination was operating in its customary grooves. The story is one that lacks the obviousness of both its fellows, the reality of one of them. The explanation of its presence in the corpus of tradition is by no means so self-evident. The original sponsor or sponsors, to whom it should be noted the *ferunt* of Suetonius looks back, transcended the limits set by convention for the legends associated with the births and infancies of poets. How influential commonplace and precedent were in controlling the choice of such marvels in the case of poets, is aptly illustrated in the *Genethliakon Lucani*, Statius *Silv.* ii. 7. 36-38. So far as the behavior of the infant is concerned, even the eulogist's partiality did not cause him to flout the norm of human realism. It was enough, by way of betokening the future poet, to describe the first cries of the child as "dulcet sounds," so to speak:

Natum protinus atque humum per ipsam
Primo murmure dulce vagientem
Blando Calliope sinu recepit.

A similar docility toward the code is revealed in the *Vita* of Lucan attributed to Vacca (Reifferscheid, *Suetonii praeter Caesarum libros reliquiae*, 76, l. 15-77, l. 3=J. Endt, *Adnotationes super Lucanum*, p. 1, ll. 19-21):

Octavum enim mensem agens Romam translatus est. Ac ne dispar eventus in eo narraretur eius qui in Hesiodo refertur, cum opinio tunc (hunc

¹ For numerous references and full discussion, see Mannhardt, *Wald- und Feldkulte*, I, 32 f.; II, 23 f.; Frazer, *Golden Bough* (3d ed.), xi. 160 f. On the possible connection of the idea with the lover's custom, oft mentioned in ancient romance, elegy, and other erotic literature, of carrying the name of his lady on the bark of trees, see Skutsch, *Gallus und Vergil*, pp. 164-65.

² *Op. cit.*, II, 23 f.

Reiffer.) non dissimilis maneret cunas infantis, quibus ferebatur apes circumvolarent, osque insidere complures, aut dulcem iam tum spiritum eius haurientes aut facundum et qualem nunc aestimamus, futurum significantes.

It is immaterial for my argument whether, as Glaeser¹ presents evidence to show, this story was an element present in Suetonius' *Vita Lucani*, from which we know the *Vita Vaccae* derived some data, or whether, as Koertge² holds, it was an addition of a later biographer, Vacca, or some predecessor. In any case it furnishes further illustration of the deference paid to legendary convention by the ancient biographers of poets. That bees should swarm about a poet in his infancy or about some other future master of language, should perhaps nourish him with honey, were especially favored prodigies. Thus, the legend had been connected with Pindar and with Plato.³ It is suggestive to note that Focas, in his poetic version of the Suetonian *Life of Vergil*, added this marvel to the others; see lines 21 f. He seems to have regarded the absence of the prodigy from his original as a lost opportunity, if not as a breach of good form.

In sum: Suetonius related of the infant Vergil a story which neither legendary convention by itself nor inherent reasons would have been likely to recommend to a chronicler, desirous of investing with a halo a great personage, as one of the stock omens appropriate to the birth of a poet. But if we take as the germ of the suggestion the concluding lines of the *Eclogue*, the impulse which moved the inventor of the tale, whoever he was, to stray from the beaten path becomes entirely luminous. Familiar as he and all the world were with Vergil's own maxim as to the way in which a child that was to become one of the great worthies of the earth should act when it first saw the light, it would seem to him felicitous and proper to assume that the infant Vergil must in like manner have given earnest of immortality *per ora virum*. Such processes of elaboration and combination have left their marks everywhere in

¹ Fr. Glaeser, *Quaestiones Suetonianae de vitis Persii, Lucani, Horatii* (Ratisbon 1911), pp. 43-44.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 227.

³ Westermann, *Biog. Graec.*, pp. 93; 97; 382. For numerous passages connecting poets and their activities with bees and honey, see Usener, *op. cit.*, 400-401 and notes.

the ancient biographies of men of letters, in scholia and ancient commentary also.

To me it is not credible that the biographical tradition would have reacted to the passage in the *Eclogue* after the fashion predicated herewith, had the sole allusion to the child's smile been contained in *risu cognoscere*. Vergil's intent to characterize the smile as a presage of future greatness would have been too cryptic, if he had left his purpose to be subserved by words the ambiguity of which was a stumbling-block even to those who thought in Latin, to inspire the concrete significance of the words in the *Life*, *ut haud dubiam spem prosperioris geniturae iam tum daret*. What is this clause but an echo of the definite assertion which exegetical tradition had first heard uttered in the words of the *Eclogue*:

. . . qui non risere parentes
nec deus hunc mensa, dea nec dignata cubili est?

I have previously remarked on the patent fact that the *ferunt* of Suetonius shows that the projection of Vergil's own words upon the child Vergil had been effected by oral or written tradition prior to the time at which Suetonius composed his biographies of the poets; i.e., according to the accepted view of the chronology of the works of Suetonius, prior to the first decade and a half of the second century A.D. How long before, we cannot say. At all events, if the considerations which I have presented are valid, we obtain evidence corroborative of Quintilian that, to put the matter with extreme conservatism, in the closing years of the first century the last lines of the *Fourth Eclogue* were read as they have been printed above.

Discussion of the significance of the precocious smile as an omen would surely have accompanied any attempt that had been made to determine the identity of the child. Under such conditions the question was bound to arise whether a claimant had in his early infancy exhibited the qualification demanded for a brilliant future. The often-quoted statement of Asconius Pedianus (*Servius Auctus* on *Ecl.* iv. 11) in which that author asserts that he had had verbal, though scarcely modest, assurance from Asinius Gallus that he himself was the child glorified in the *Eclogue*, shows that the controversy which has dragged its weary length through two millenniums was

afoot in the first quarter of the first century. For Asinius died in the year 33 A.D. To the same period may well belong the origin of what would be called *Americane* the "boom" in favor of the perhaps not apocryphal Saloninus,¹ a son of Pollio, who died in infancy. That the smile motive figured in this rather unlovely debate as to which scion of the House of Pollio was the object of Vergil's eulogy, is indicated by the note of Servius on line 1, although with that tantalizing inconsistency so befogging to the modern seeker after truth the portent is here given an unpropitious significance at variance with the content of the notes on line 60 and on *Aeneid* vi. 862.

More germane to our problem is this fact, to which we can pin our faith. The transfer of the omen to the birth of Vergil must have been made by a biographer or critic whose bias to the poet was friendly. In the Suetonian *Life* we have ample testimony as to the literary feud of which the name and the fame of Vergil were the center, even in his lifetime. The vestiges of sympathetic and apologetic writers who dealt with the career of the poet are here crossed by many traces of critics hostile to his work and slanderous of his character. Among friendly critics we must place, of course, Varius, who, as Quintilian *Inst.* x. 3. 8 proves, treated in some formal way biographical facts pertaining to Vergil. Eros, the secretary of Vergil in the poet's declining years (Brummer, ll. 114 f.), would presumably have only praise of his master to relate. Last, but not least among champions of Vergil, must be mentioned Asconius Pedianus. When we meditate upon the number of possibilities latent in the reference of Aulus Gellius xvii. 10. 2 to *amici . . . familiaresque P. Vergilii in his quae de ingenio moribusque eius tradiderunt*, to try to localize exactly the agent responsible for the application of the lines of the *Eclogue* to the poet himself would seem to be sheer Alexandrianism. Suffice it to say that, if we canvass plausibilities, Asconius Pedianus would present the strongest claims. The passage from Servius alluded to above shows that Asconius busied himself prayerfully with the problem of the identity of the *puer*. He

¹ Marx, *Neue Jahrb.*, I (1898), 106, regards Servius' information about Saloninus as authentic and based on documentary sources. See Klebs, *Prosop.*, I, 169, No. 1038; K. Kunst, *BPhw.*, XL (1920), 694 f.

cannot have failed to be alive to the value of the omen as prophetic of future greatness. His book entitled *Contra obtrectatores Vergilii* may well have had a formal *vita* prefixed to it, as had been the practice in connection with treatises on literary subjects and *genres* from the time of Aristotle on. Certainly it incorporated biographical data; the apologetic tenor of Asconius' version of the tittle-tattle concerning a *liaison* between Vergil and Plotia Hieria points straight to a work conceived in a spirit of rehabilitation. Hence the source of the citation in the Suetonian *Life* (Brummer, ll. 32 f.) can hardly have lain elsewhere than in the *Contra obtrectatores*. The apologist, because of the very pressure exercised upon him by the disparagements and the aspersions to which he undertakes to put the quietus, develops a keen eye for data usable as a counterblast. No shred of evidence was too tenuous for the ancient encomiast or apologist to turn to his own ends in the effort to portray his hero as *teres atque rotundus*. When there was a dearth of facts, imagination could supply them, and commit no breach of literary ethics. To those detractors of Vergil who had assailed his personal character, harped on his alleged literary crimes, and branded his works as the productions of a botcher, destitute of real claim to greatness, what answer would be more in point than the assurance that in his face at birth had shone the sign that he was made of more than common clay?

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